

Yomotsu Hirasaka

In Japanese mythology, Yomotsu Hirasaka is the entrance to the underworld and the place where the god Izanagi and the goddess Izanami were separated for eternity. According to the ancient book of legends known as the *Kojiki*, Izanagi and Izanami created the islands of Japan by churning the ocean with a jeweled spear. When the goddess died after giving birth to the god of fire, she entered the world of darkness called Yomi-no-kuni. Her husband Izanagi rashly traveled there to bring her back to the world of the living. Izanami had already eaten the food of the underworld, and so was forbidden from returning, but she begged the gods to make an exception. It was agreed that she could return on the condition that Izanagi not look at her until she had finished her lengthy preparations. Izanagi patiently waited, but eventually could not resist stealing a glance, and was shocked to see that Izanami had become a rotting, maggot-ridden corpse. Enraged at his betrayal, Izanami sent demons and an army of hags to capture and kill Izanagi, but he successfully fought them off. Izanami set off in pursuit, but Izanagi escaped to the world of the living and rolled a huge stone over the entrance to the underworld. That stone can be seen today at Yomotsu Hirasaka, still preventing Izanami from escaping and wreaking havoc on our world.